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PLEIADES, ORION AND MAZZAROTH.

Job xxxviii., 31, 32.

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The first word to be considered is **מַעֲרָנוֹת**. It is translated in the E. V. "sweet influences," as derived from **עָרַן**. Lexicons and commentaries generally make **מַעֲרָנוֹת**, by transposition, equivalent to **מַעֲרָדוֹת**. This transposition word is derived from **עָנַד** to bind, Arabic **عند** = *Aanad vicinage, nearness, a thing at one's side*. This word is used twice as a verb (Job xxxi., 36 and Prov. vi., 21), and nowhere as a substantive, save in this place according to the transposers. According to this transposition, the word in the passage is variously rendered "bands," "bindings," "twistings," "clusterings," etc., of the Pleiades. But the transposition is demonstrably wrong. The feminine plural noun **מַעֲרָנוֹת** occurs only in this passage. But the masculine form **מַעֲרָן** occurs in four places. To translate the masculine form in these places as derived from **עָנַד**, shows the absurdity of translating the feminine form in this passage as derived from that root. Without transposition, **מַעֲרָנוֹת** is manifestly derived from **עָרַן** as the root. Gesenius says of **עָרַן** "a root not used in Kal, which appears to have had the signification of softness, laxity; Arab. **غدن** = *Ghadan* to be flexible, to vacillate, **غَدْنٌ** softness, laxity, languor, **عَدَانٌ** a cane, or reed, a tall rod (pr. vacillating, vibrating in the air)." But **غدن** = *Ghadan* is not the Arabic word that corresponds to the Hebrew **עָרַן**, but an entirely different word, having a different spelling and a different meaning. The Arabic word that corresponds to the Hebrew **עָרַן** exists under precisely corresponding letters: Hebrew **עָרַן**, Arabic **عدن** = *Aadan*. So much is unmistakably shown by the usages of the words in Hebrew and Arabic. Now the Arabic word **عدن** = *Aadan* means to remain, to stay, to keep a thing to a certain place without allowing it to quit that place, and to do so by some gentle, sweet, harmonious influence or power; as when camels tied to a certain stake in a certain spot move around it in a comparatively large circle, contentedly feeding upon the luxuriant grass that abounds. The strict accuracy and unquestionable force of this meaning as the true meaning of both the Hebrew and Arabic words **עָרַן** and **عدن** appear from the usages of the words, and will further appear when we come to apply it in the interpretation of this passage, after we have considered the lexical meaning of **בִּימָה**.

בִּימָה is a noun fem. sing. from the root **כּוּם**. Of this root Gesenius says,—
"An unused root. Arabic **كام** *Kam* to heap up, **كُومَة** = *Komatun, a heap*, like the Hebrew **בִּימָה**, which see." Turning then to **בִּימָה**, Gesenius defines,—
"A heap,

cluster (from the root כּוּם, which see); specially of stars, hence the Pleiades, or the seven stars, consisting of seven larger stars, and other lesser ones closely grouped; Arab. ثُرَيَّا = *Thuraya* (plenty, multitude), more fully عَقْدُ الثُّرَيَّا = *Ookd-eth-Thuraya* the bundle of the Pleiades." But Gesenius does not give us the full meaning of the Arabic كَام = *Kam*, and his other Arabic references to the Pleiades are incomplete. The Arabic has a number of names for the Pleiades, indicating their appearance in the heavens, their significance in the economy of nature, etc. Among these names we have the one mentioned by Gesenius, viz., الثُّرَيَّا = *Eth-Thuraya*, which means the Pleiades as comprising, in appearance, many stars in a small space; for it is said that, amid its conspicuous stars, are many obscure stars, the number altogether being said to be twenty-four, according to an assertion of Muhammad. ثُرَيَّا also means a cluster of lamps, resting in holes in the bottom of a lantern. The lamps are so called as being likened to the Pleiades in the heavens. The Pleiades are also called by the Arabs النَّجْمُ = *En-Nagmoo*, that is, *The Asterism*, because it was regarded as being the most beneficial and excellent of all star-groups in its influences on the weather. And because the setting of one star and the simultaneous rising of another, that is the Pleiades, indicated approaching rain, and took place just before the rains began to fall in Arabia; therefore the Pleiades were also called نَوءٌ = *No-un*. Alluding to the copiousness of the tears he had shed because of the absence of his divine friend, the matchless Ibn-Il-Fared says

جاد ان ضنّ نوء الطرف اذ يسقط خي

"Still in a parched land would torrents flow,
Though on earth's rim the Pleiades had failed to glow."

But the word used by the Almighty in calling Job's attention to the Pleiades was כְּמִיָּה, root כּוּם, Arabic كَام = *Kam*, and كَوْمَةٌ = *Komat* corresponding to כְּמִיָּה. But Gesenius does not give us the radical and full meaning of the Arabic. The Arabic كَام = *Kam* means something more than "to heap up," and كَوْمَةٌ = *Komat* more than "a heap," as see Butris Bustani's Arabic Lexicon, *et al.* The word كَام = *Kam* is used with reference to many particles of sand being gathered together and heaped up so that they stand upright, like a pillar, upon a certain place, socket, or pivot. The word is also used with reference to a thing or person standing upon and turning around upon a certain point or pivot, as when a person stands or turns round upon the tip of his foot. This is the meaning of the word God employs. God employs it to indicate a certain group of stars. That group of stars is none other than the Pleiades, because precisely this is the truth about the Pleiades, and about them alone. By a series of calculations independent, and indeed ignorant of the truth contained in this passage in Job, the science of Astronomy has recently discovered that the heap or

cluster of stars called the Pleiades constitute the standig-place, the point, socket, pivot about which the whole solar system revolves. They have discovered that Alcyone, the brightest star of the Pleiades, is *the* center of gravity of our vast solar system, the starry pivotal point on which and about which worlds and systems of worlds go moving through space. There is a plain intimation of this fact when we consider the number of stars there grouped together in comparatively so small a space. Now it becomes apparent what is the true meaning and peculiar force of the word **מַעֲרִנּוֹת** as derived from **עָרַן**, Arabic **عَدَن** A a d a n, to keep or hold a thing to a certain place without allowing it to quit that place, and to do so by some gentle, sweet, or harmoniously working influence or power, as when camels tied to a certain stake in a certain spot move around it in a comparatively large circle, contentedly feeding upon the luxuriant grass that abounds. So the Pleiades keep and hold in their places the worlds and systems of worlds as they go moving in their circling orbits around that starry stake, that pivot of power. In their revolutions around the Pleiades these worlds and systems of worlds move most harmoniously. There is not a deviation, not a disturbance. So the holding and keeping influences or powers of the Pleiades are gentle, sweet, harmoniously working. It is the harmonious operation of God's great laws reigning throughout the universe. Did not such harmony prevail, were the Pleiades to let go or loosen for a moment their constant and harmonious holdings and keepings of the worlds of the solar system, destruction and disturbance would come to those worlds, and cosmos be turned to chaos. And so the wisdom, power and goodness of God are mightily and magnificently manifest. The force of the challenge to Job and the glorious truth contained in the same are apparent. Canst thou bind together, stop, bring to naught these constant and powerful and harmonious holdings of the Pleiades? And so understand, moreover, that God reigns in and over human affairs, wisely, beneficently, omnipotently,—making every thing to work together for good.

The bands of Orion are his **מוֹשְׁכוֹת**, from **מָשַׁךְ**, Arabic **مَسَك** = M a s a k, that is, *the drawings, the takings hold, the drawn bandings, the girdlings* of **בְּסִיל**. According to the Hebrew and Arabic usages of the word **בְּסִיל**, it refers to the constellation of Orion. The three stars about midway in the constellation, and arranged somewhat obliquely as to the rest of the constellation, constitute the bands or girdlings of Orion. From these girdlings three other stars are ranged downward, constituting Orion's pendent sword. The interpretation which represents Orion as a giant chained to the skies, etc., is a comparatively modern myth which is utterly without foundation in the language, and utterly unworthy being thought of in this connection. God is speaking; and God is speaking about past and present and eternal facts, and not about the possible and passing and puerile fancies of men. **בְּסִיל** is derived from **בָּסַל** whose primary meaning appears to be "to be fleshy, to be fat," whence **בָּסַל** *loin, flank*. The word is applied in a

good and bad sense. In a good sense, as meaning "strength, firmness, boldness." In a bad sense, as meaning "languor, inertness, folly." The corresponding Arabic word كسل = Kasal comprises both of these meanings, and not simply the meaning of "languor and inertness," according to Gesenius. According to the first meaning, and the root of the word, we have the signification of giant, and hence Orion, a constellation or set of stars representing in full outline a giant figure. But we must go to the Arabic, and to the ideas of the old Arabian Astronomers, to be confirmed and further informed in the interpretation of دَسِل by Orion. As in the case of the Pleiades, so the Arabs have a number of names for the constellation Orion. It will suffice to mention two or three of these as illustrative of the passage. Orion was and is called الْجَبَّارُ = Al-gabbaro, that is, "the great, mighty, gigantic one." This is the word used in the Arabic versions. Orion was so called because the relative position of the stars constituting that constellation represented the form of a kingly and gigantic personage enthroned in the heavens and marching through the skies. The constellation of Orion was also called الْجَوَزَاءُ = Al-Goza, from جَوَز = Goz, meaning "to pass in or along, to traverse or cross the middle, and pass through it." The constellation of Orion was so called because of the three very bright stars disposed obliquely in the midst thereof, constituting the bands or girdlings of the starry giant Orion, as passing along and about his middle or waist or loins, and so called by the Arabs النَّظْمُ = En-Nazm, and نِطَاقُ الْجَوَزَاءِ = Nitak-ul-Goza, and فَقَارُ الْجَوَزَاءِ = Fakar-ul-Goza. The word God employs is دَسِل. It is derived from دَسِل to be *fleshy, large, strong, firm, bold*; hence *giant*; hence *Orion*. The precisely corresponding Arabic word is كسل = Kasal, which has the same meanings and additional meanings: as, for example, a person strongly taking and firmly holding a certain position; and again, the strong cord or band of a bow as wound around one end and strongly pulled across the middle, and firmly wound around the other end. These definitions refer plainly and can refer only to the constellation Orion. How so? What is the fact about that constellation? Just this: that those three brilliant stars which constitute the bands or girdlings of Orion never change their form. They preserve the same relative position to each other and to the rest of the constellation from night to night, and year to year, and age to age; so that they present precisely the same appearance to us now that they did to Job in the land of Uz milleniums ago. In the vast firmament of starry hosts, where constant and stupendous changes are going on, these stars constituting the bands of Orion do ceaselessly, changelessly maintain their relative positions. And so as to the force of the challenge,—Canst thou loosen, open, disband these firm bands?—Canst thou bring change, disturbance, disorder as to the relative positions uniformly and uniquely occupied by these stars in all time? Alter these unvarying positions, annul the law which binds them together in these

eternal relations, burst open those blazing bands—if thou canst. And so as to the truth set forth,—Understand, O Job, understand, O man, that the All-wise, All-mighty, All-good God is uniformly, unchangeably, unendingly so.

Job's scientific knowledge, as well as spiritual appreciation of these astronomical allusions, can scarcely be a matter of doubt. If any one doubt it, let me remind him that he is making God to darken counsel by using words without knowledge in thus addressing Job with language of which Job had no true or adequate comprehension. Let me remind him that Job's spiritual appreciation of such language as this was such as to overwhelm him with penitence, humility and awe; and the production of such an effect is conceivable only on the ground that Job's scientific knowledge was very accurate and very profound. Let me remind him of the preeminent position occupied by the Arabians from the very earliest times as to the science of Astronomy. Let me remind him of the meanings of those three ancient Arabic expressions before mentioned as used to designate Orion and his girdlings or bands, *نطاق الجوزاء* and *نظام الجوزاء* and *فقا الجوزاء*, that is, the regularly ordered, the eternally ordered, the eloquently and magnificently ordered bands of Orion. Let me remind him that there are numerous passages in the poetry of the old Arabians that display a remarkable knowledge of Astronomy, similar to that revealed and displayed in these passages of Scripture, which were, I doubt not, thoroughly understood by the great Arabian patriarch Job. I quote a couplet from an old Arabian poem at hand,—a poem celebrating the matchless and immemorial hospitality of the Arabians:—

“I looked to the sky's azure tent, where Orion already
Stood watching by night, and his sword in its belt glittered steady.”

Beha Ed Deen Zoheir, an Arab poet of Egypt who flourished in the thirteenth century, says,—

وَتَفَرَّعَتْ لِلْمَجْدِ مِنْكَ ثَلَاثَةٌ كَثَلَاثَةِ الْجُوزَاءِ فِي جَنْبَاتِهِ
مِنْ كُلِّ مَهْدِيٍّ غَدَا فِي مَهْدِهِ يَسْمُو إِلَى أَسْلَافِهِ بِسِمَاتِهِ

“Well mayest thou rest! three sons are thine,
Who shall perpetuate thy line,—
Like those three brilliant stars that shine
On old Orion's breast.
Who in their very cradle bore
Marks of God's guiding hand, and wore
Signs of that worth, with which of yore
Thy ancestors were blest.”

“Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?” The word is *مَزَارُوت*. We are advised to change the *م* into *ز* and derive the word from *زَار* to *separate*

oneself, abstain, consecrate. We are advised to change the ך into ך and convert מְזֻזֹת into מְזֻזֹת. According to this latter change we are to render the word by "lodging places," from the Arabic منزل = Manzal, and refer it to the signs of the Zodiac. But all this is so arbitrary and unnecessary, so utterly without any reasonable foundation, that it becomes irreverent and preposterous to think of God, who is here speaking,—to think of God as thus changing, accommodating, corrupting language in its usage,—God, who all through this chapter has been using words that corresponded with the utmost truth and accuracy to the actual, scientific, creative facts about those phenomena concerning which he was speaking. מְזֻזֹת is an unused root in the Hebrew, but it is not an unused root in the Arabic. The root exists under precisely the same letters in Arabic, viz., مَزَز = Mazzar. One of the principal definitions of this root in Arabic refers to the perforated piece of wood at the top of the tent into which the upper extremity of the tent pole is thrust as a button into its loop, and also to the pulling of the ropes that join this piece of wood at the top of the tent to the stakes all around the tent about which the several ropes are looped or buttoned. Now it is utterly impossible to give this language any other interpretation than that which refers it to the satellites as they move about their planets, held to the planets by the law of gravitation; to the planets and their satellites [as they move about the sun, held by it and to it according to the same law of gravitation; to the sun and the planets and the satellites and the whole solar system moving about Alcyone of the Pleiades, held by it and to it according to the same wonderful law. And so as to the force of the challenge,—What does man know about the movements of these bodies, about the law of gravitation? How much less can he effect as to the sending forth of these planets, each in its appointed time, each to its appointed sphere, each with its appointed velocity, and thus maintain them? Here is a complexity of bodies, a complexity of relations, a complexity of movements. And yet in the midst of all this manifold and marvelous complexity, there is a marvelous harmony. In all this complexity and harmony the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of God are transcendently manifest. And the teaching,—the same is certainly and gloriously true as to man in the complexity of human affairs.